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JOHN LAIRD, Secretary for Natural Resources

July 29, 2011

Joseph Grindstaff  
Executive Director, Delta Stewardship Council  
980 Ninth Street, Suite 1500  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Joe:

Thank you for your letter of May 26, 2011 requesting assistance in identifying storage, conveyance and ecosystem restoration actions that could be considered for inclusion in the Delta Plan's near-term (the next 15 years) recommendations. I welcome your inquiry and believe it is exactly the sort of consultation the Delta Reform Act (Act) envisions between the Delta Stewardship Council (Council) and the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) process.

#### BDCP Implementation Timeline

As is required by the Natural Communities Conservation Planning Act (NCCPA), the draft BDCP will include a schedule for implementing conservation measures throughout the plan's 50-year horizon. The most current draft implementation schedule is included as an attachment, although efforts are underway with stakeholders to define with more specificity habitat restoration projects, particularly in the South Delta. The schedule identifies numerous actions that are expected to be pursued in the first 15 years of the plan. Actions will begin in the first year of the plan, the year in which regulatory authorizations are issued by the state and federal fish and wildlife agencies pursuant to the BDCP.

It is important to note that, among other considerations, the implementation schedule is determined through a scientific analysis that ensures that restoration of the ecosystem and contributions to the recovery of natural communities and species occurs lock-step with projects that impact them. As such, the implementation schedule is one of many ways in which the BDCP is crafted to meet the co-equal goals of water supply reliability and ecosystem restoration.

#### Habitat Restoration

The most significant effort by far will be the initiation of habitat restoration and enhancement on a very large scale. These activities will complement "Natural Communities Protection" efforts that will be pursued concurrently in the Delta Plan. Close coordination of habitat actions across and among agencies will be important to ensure implementation is synergistic and maximizes the benefits to sensitive species and Delta communities. Furthermore, the Council should continue to play a significant role in undertaking a review of various state and federal resource policies that may be contradictory and/or could raise significant obstacles to moving forward on such projects quickly (e.g. the Army Corps levee vegetation policy).

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Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy • Sierra Nevada Conservancy • State Lands Commission • Wildlife Conservation Board



#### Reduction of Other Stressors

Of perhaps most significance with respect to the potential for the Council to engage constructively in promoting conservation measures in the near-term, are the actions relating to addressing "Other Species-Level Stressors". As you know, the imperative to address "other stressors" and ameliorate or eliminate their impacts was highlighted in the Delta Vision Strategic Plan and acknowledged in the current version of the Draft Delta Plan. This is also the area in which the Council's unique capacity and legislatively intended role to act as a synthesizer, integrator and coordinator of actions across agencies could be most beneficially targeted, as such collaboration is the best and sometimes only way to effectively address and reduce "other stressors" impacting the Delta. Early in the planning effort for the BDCP a number of actions to reduce various threats and stressors to sensitive Delta species and their habitat were identified. Many of these were determined to be outside of the authority of the BDCP to ensure implementation and have not been incorporated into the current list of BDCP conservation actions. Most of these actions are within the purview of State agencies and could be pursued through the Delta Plan. For your information I have included as Attachment 2 a list of potential other stressor measures that the Council could consider including in the Delta Plan as recommended near-term actions which have been identified as beneficial during the development of the BDCP.

#### Conveyance

As you know, improving Delta conveyance is central to the BDCP and is inherent in the coequal goals for management of the Delta. The BDCP incorporates improved Delta conveyance facilities that will likely not be constructed and operational until the end of the Delta Plan's near-term timeframe. During the period prior to that, however, the Council could include and recommend actions in the Delta Plan that would be helpful in improving through-Delta conveyance and contribute to more effective and efficient export project operational criteria consistent with the coequal goals.

The ongoing work of the Delta Stewardship Council to include a strategic levee investment strategy in the Delta Plan is an essential component of near-term water supply reliability. It is appropriate and beneficial to make a primary focus of near-term levee investments the prioritization of levees that help to protect the statewide interest in a stable and resilient through-Delta conveyance capability. The Council should consider levee projects that could be combined with habitat actions to support the co-equal goals as priority near-term actions.

#### Storage

With regard to the question of storage, the BDCP does not contain actions to improve existing storage capacity or build new storage facilities. However, the Council could work with and develop recommendations for the California Water Commission to conduct a review of and solicit proposals for potential local and regional storage projects and opportunities (surface and ground) that could be implemented or fast-tracked in the near-term. Such projects, once identified and prioritized, would, if implemented, further the achievement of the coequal goals and be responsive to the Act's call for the state to reduce reliance on the Delta watershed in meeting its future water supply needs.

#### Science

Another contribution the Council could make to complement the BDCP is to build up the technical and scientific capacity of the resource and regulatory agencies with regard to improving understanding of environmental and water quality factors as they related to operational criteria regulating the State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project. If the Delta Science Program could undertake an effort to increase the reservoir of "best available science" available to inform the State Water Resources Control Board's activities pursuant to its strategic plan for the Bay Delta, that could provide an important contribution to helping to resolve a number of resource management conflicts in the system.

Joseph Grindstaff, Executive Director

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Thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the Council regarding possible near-term actions to consider for the Delta Plan. With the current condition of the Delta ecosystem and precarious condition of many of its sensitive species, successfully meeting the co-equal goals will depend on addressing a suite of issues during the near-term implementation phase. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jerry Meral

cc. John McCamman  
Mark Cowin  
Phil Isenberg